

# Burnt Hill Recreational Trail Plan

DRAFT: Development in progress

10/04/05

## Introduction

Burnt Hill, located just south of Sequim (see context map), is both a timber-producing forest and a local recreation area. Visitors enjoy hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, off-road vehicle use, and hunting among other recreation uses.

This forest is part of the legacy of public lands managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR manages more than five million acres of state-owned forest, aquatic, agricultural, conservation and urban lands for long-term benefits to current and future trust beneficiaries and the people of Washington. As a working forest, Burnt Hill continues to be a place where people work and play outdoors, as planned harvesting and reforestation bring a stream of revenue to schools and county trusts.

This plan is intended to guide how DNR manages recreation and public access on Burnt Hill. It outlines the region's recreation goals and the priorities for managing existing recreation and recreation facilities. The plan also includes specific steps to be taken over the next five years toward achieving the plan goals.

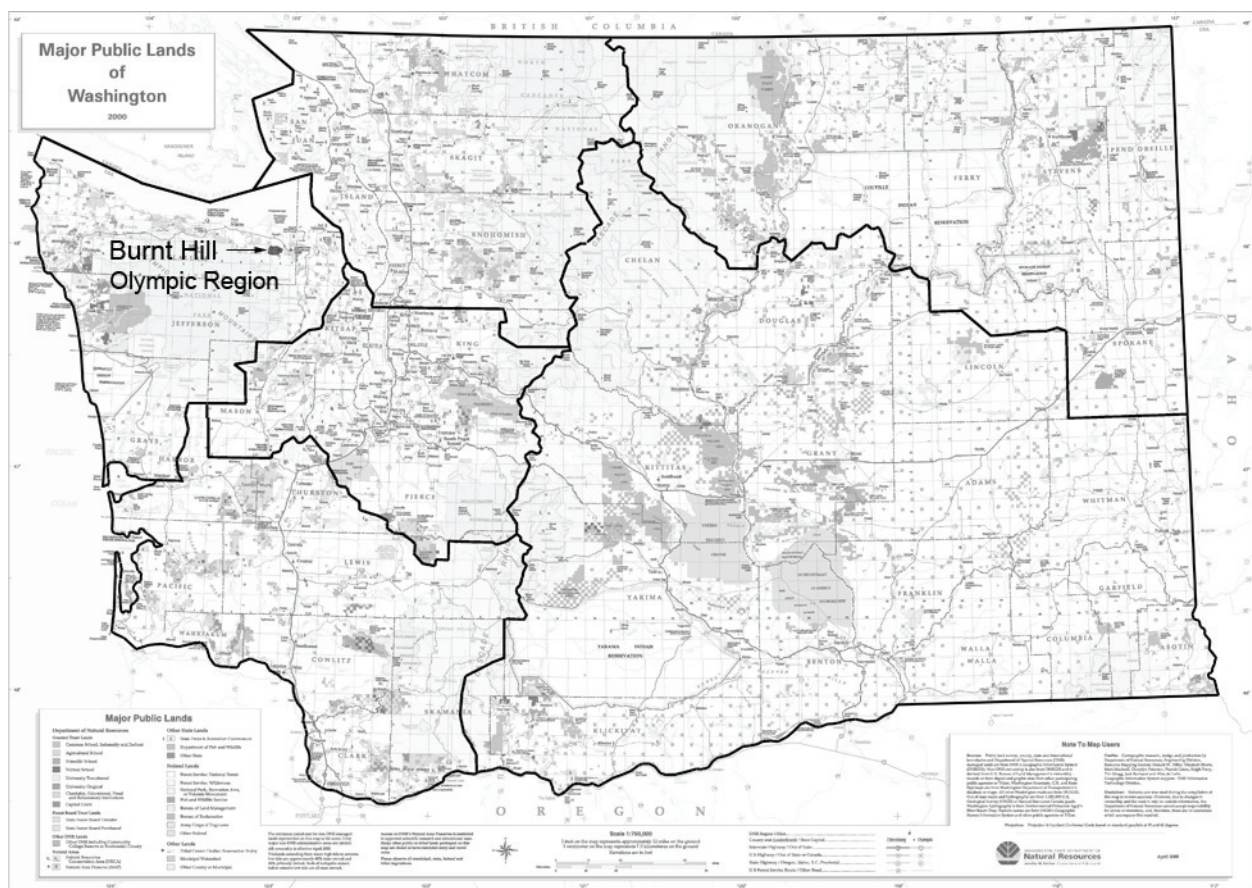


Figure 1. Burnt Hill context map.

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## A Working Forest

Like many of the uplands DNR manages, the lands of Burnt Hill are trust lands. Some were granted by Congress in 1889 at statehood. Others are Forest Board trust lands, purchased or acquired later. By law, state-owned trust lands are to be managed to produce income for schools, universities, state institutions, county services, and the state General Fund. Since 1970, DNR-managed trust lands statewide have produced more than \$5.7 billion in revenue, reducing the need for taxes to pay for public projects and services.

Since 1971, state law (Chapter 79.10.100 RCW) directs DNR to allow multiple use, such as recreation areas, trails, hunting, fishing, etc., on trust uplands. The multiple use must be consistent with the applicable trust provisions and in the best interests of the state and the general welfare of the citizens.

In managing Burnt Hill, DNR works to:

- Responsibly harvest timber to provide revenue for the trust beneficiaries, as mandated by law
- Protect the long-term health of the forest's ecosystems, including wildlife and water quality
- Provide safe recreational and educational opportunities to the public

## Statewide Recreation

Across the state, DNR's recreation program maintains and operates 143 recreation sites and more than 1,100 miles of trail—some motorized, some non-motorized, and many support multiple use types, including mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking, and ORVs. Forest roads on trust lands provide access to designated<sup>1</sup> sites and also provide access for dispersed recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking and sightseeing.

DNR's recreation facilities<sup>2</sup> complement those offered by other agencies across the state. These include federal agencies such as the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and National Park Service; state agencies, such as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Washington State Parks; and quasi-private land managers, such as Tacoma Power and Light. Many of these agencies offer facilities that are more developed, require fees or take reservations. In contrast, though there are a few permit-only facilities, DNR's recreation facilities are typically on a first-come, first-served, no-fee basis.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Designated Trails are those trails that are maintained, managed, or have been approved by DNR for recreation use.

<sup>2</sup> DNR's recreation facilities include the designated trails, trailheads, campgrounds and other sites as well as their accompanying amenities, such as signage and restrooms.

<sup>3</sup> In the Olympic Region any advertised event and any event that charges an entry fee requires a permit.

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## Olympic Region & Recreation

The Olympic Region is one of six regions with responsibility to manage state trust lands in Washington State, following DNR policies and state and federal laws. Out of 2.1 million acres of state trust forestlands statewide, the Olympic Region manages about 366,000 acres of state trust forestland and regulates forest practices on approximately one million acres of state and private forestland. The region also includes 5,245 acres of conservation land. Additionally, there are state owned tidelands and bedlands that are managed by the Aquatic Lands program through the Orca District.

The Olympic Region covers Clallam, Jefferson and portions of Grays Harbor counties. The Olympic Mountains, an extension of the Coast Range from Oregon, form the core of the Olympic Peninsula. The peninsula is bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the north, and Hood Canal to the east. The southern flanks of the Olympic Mountains adjoin the lowlands of Grays Harbor Basin. Public Use is currently managed under two geographic districts, the Straits District, mainly spanning the Straits on the North Peninsula, and the Coast District, which stretches from Cape Flattery down to Grays Harbor. The region headquarters is located in Forks.

The Olympic Region manages public use within various types of urban, rural and remote areas. High public use concentrations are typically found in trust lands and sites that are close to urban areas. Region-wide, most public use activities in the Olympic Region tend to be associated with hunting, fishing, camping, and ORV use.

There are 10 campgrounds, two designated multiple use trails, and two designated non-motorized trails in the region. There are also more than 65 miles of undesignated<sup>4</sup> trails in the region. Most of the designated sites are in close proximity to rivers with the exception of a few trail systems in the foothills. Water access is typically associated with fishing and is highly valued by those living in the Olympic Region. In addition, road access through DNR or other agency lands is of primary importance to both local and out-of-region hunters during the fall season.

## Statewide Recreation Funding

As is the case with other state programs and agencies, the recreation program within the DNR has seen a shrinking budget over the past few years. This reduction in funding has resulted in a few recreation site closures, reduced staff, reduced level of service at some facilities and fewer capital improvement projects being carried out. At the same time, we have seen an increase in visitors to the department's managed trust lands throughout the state.

The department receives its recreation funding from several different sources. A large portion of the funding comes from the Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Program. This is revenue collected from the state gasoline tax. Every time a driver purchases fuel in Washington State, a small percentage of the tax paid goes towards funding recreation on DNR managed lands. Another portion of the budget comes from the state's General Fund. This is general tax dollars that are appropriated to the department by the Legislature to manage

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<sup>4</sup> Undesignated Trails are those trails that are not built, managed, or approved by DNR for recreation use.

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recreation. A third source of funding the department depends upon is grant funding from organizations such as the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC).

DNR applies for several grants each year to help fund recreation maintenance, improvements, education and enforcement. This grant funding is not guaranteed, however, as the department must compete on a project-by-project basis against other state and federal agencies and private organizations. In order to compete for grants, DNR must have the ability to provide matching funds and the staff resources to apply for and administer each grant.

## **Burnt Hill Recreation Funding**

DNR must have funding in place to maintain current recreation activities in a manner that protects the environment, is compatible with resource management objectives, and provides for safe recreation opportunities. Recreation and access opportunities on Burnt Hill may be limited if funding continues to be reduced and grants are not available to assist with this maintenance. This recreational trail plan depends on volunteers contributing their support by committing donated labor, materials and/or equipment. Even if grant funding is obtained, volunteer contributions will be needed.

The Burnt Hill Recreational Trail Plan was initiated in order to manage ORV and other trail uses. It is funded in part by a NOVA Off-Road Vehicle grant from the IAC under application number 02-1402 N. DNR received \$59,665, with DNR providing an additional \$5,000 matching funds for this grant. The non-motorized portions of this plan are funded by DNR staff time charged to department recreation program budgets and volunteers contributing non-grant hours.

## **Recreation Planning Efforts**

This planning process builds upon past planning efforts.

In 1999, DNR received a grant from the IAC for the Burnt Hill Inventory & Assessment, which was completed in 2001. As a part of this assessment, after initial input from recreation visitors, neighbors, interest groups and citizens at large, a focus group of these various interests was formed to continue conducting the inventory and assessment together with DNR. The results of that assessment supported the IAC grant request that partially funds this plan, and have been used as a foundation to this plan.

## **Use of the Plan**

The use of this Burnt Hill Recreational Trail Plan is intended as the following:

- Provide a five-year plan for ORV recreation, non-motorized recreation and public access in the forest by detailing recreation management goals
- Present specific objectives and strategies to DNR staff to guide recreation and access management
- Provide a recreational facilities master plan to guide trail renovation and relocation as well as parking accommodation over the next five years

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- Supplement future funding requests with information from this plan

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